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THE PRESENT SITUATION IN MEXICO AS SHAPED BY PAST EVENTS

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Porfirio Díaz, great and wonderful as certain of his accomplishments were, gave Mexico a very lop-sided administration. Her development under him was almost entirely economic in character. He paid little attention to the social uplift of his people, his widely advertised solicitude for education having been strangely exaggerated; he made almost no attempt to reform the structure of society, which for a large part of the people is that of feudalism; he denied them even the slightest opportunity for political training; and promoted injustice rather than justice.

His methods may have proceeded from good motives, but the statement well made by someone that he "mistook the wealth of the country for its well-being" is at best a charitable judgment of his rule. To his all-consuming desire of setting the wheels of industry in motion and giving his treasury a favorable standing in foreign money markets, he subordinated everything else. He sought to get the natural resources of the country used, but cared little who used them. The quickest way to accomplish this was, or appeared to be, to give all encouragement to capitalists, native and foreign, and to promote the concentration of wealth. The national blessings to be derived from a fair distribution of the rewards of labor, he seems hardly to have dreamed of. In some cases, even, willing employers were officially discouraged from raising the wages of their help. The land was more monopolized at the end of his rule than at its beginning. His administration made for the exploitation of the Mexican nation rather than for its development.

No country can enjoy true progress under such one-sided government, and injustice patiently endured never made a

nation great. Sufficient proof that the methods of Díaz were not those which Mexico needed, at least in the last decade of his rule, is furnished by the deplorable condition to which they have brought her.

When the reaction came in 1910 it was natural that the pendulum should swing too far. Madero was extravagant in his promises, and the people were too impatient in their demand for immediate reforms. But Madero had prepared his downfall in the very moment of his victory over Díaz. He then, to stop bloodshed and perhaps for other reasons, made a compromise with the old régime that delayed and made difficult the consummation of his reforms. If, as may be true, he himself, when President, became somewhat shaken also in his plans, the purpose of the Mexican people remained steady. The earlier revolts against Madero, as well as those of Félix Díaz, were perhaps led by selfish men; but they were largely supported by peons who, however vague their understanding of their own desires, were insistent that the revolution should not be abortive in its results.

It was this division of the great progressive element that gave the reactionary party under Félix Díaz and General Huerta its chance to overthrow the government. Their victory was at bottom more significant of the intense desire of the nation for a new era of justice than it was of dissatisfaction with the experiment in democracy, which was far too short to afford any real test whatsoever.

At this point mention may well be made of an erroneous statement which of late has appeared in American newspapers, and which should be corrected; the statement that when Madero was elected President he polled only 20,000 votes. Presidential elections in Mexico are indirect, and the mistake has arisen through a confusion of the popular vote with the electoral vote. For the purpose of national elections, under the electoral law in force until December, 1911, the country was divided into "sections" of 500 inhabitants each, one member of the electoral college being chosen from each section.¹ As there is a Mexican population of

¹In this particular the new law is virtually the same.

15,000,000 people, there existed theoretically about 30,000 electoral sections. Actually there were only about 20,000 in which polls were held at the time of Madero's election. Approximately 95 per cent of the presidential electors from these 20,000 sections cast their votes for Madero.

Of the 500 inhabitants of a section, the normal number of voters is from 80 to 100. On the average, probably from 20 to 25 per cent of these went to the polls. It might be impossible to obtain authentic figures, but it seems safe to say that the 19,000 electors who cast their votes for Madero were chosen by the ballots of 350,000 Mexicans. Even this number is a small portion of those entitled to the suffrage; but, under the circumstances, it is reasonable to consider their choice as fairly representative of the will of the Mexican people.

The purpose of bringing Mexico into a new era, which they failed to accomplish through that election, they will seek new agencies to fulfill. Its chief exponents at present are the Constitutionalists. The leaders may be expected to profit from Madero's mistakes, and to accept no compromises that are likely to defeat their ends. The results of past compromises will explain General Carranza's unwillingness for mediation. If he treats with Huerta, it will probably be when Huerta's control is so far gone that Carranza will be able practically to dictate the terms. He must feel sure that the man who may be selected for provisional President is one in whose democracy the people will have entire confidence. They have been so accustomed to elections determined by official power that otherwise they would not vote freely in the polling for a permanent president. The result might be a choice not at all representative of the will of the nation, and the revolution would remain to be fought over again.

Foreign governments, therefore, desiring to end the disorder, should beware of forcing a compromise. They should give little heed to capitalists who are more interested in securing present returns from their Mexican investments, even through an iron-handed and cruelly oppressive

peace for a number of years, than they are in bringing permanent happiness to Mexico. If the people do not get justice now, they will surely demand it later, for "The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on."